

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A pellet comprising a compacted inner matrix and at least one coating, wherein the inner matrix comprises viable micro-organisms, wherein the inner matrix, before or shortly after the coating, is characterised by a water activity of below 0.3, and the coating comprises a moisture barrier, characterised in that the pellet has a volume of at least 0.02cm³.

Claim 2 (canceled)

Claim 3 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix has an envelope density of more than 0.8g/cm³.

Claim 4 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, which comprises 10⁵ to 10¹⁴ viable micro-organisms.

Claim 5 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix further comprises at least one component selected from the group of fillers, functional ingredients, lubricants, plasticizers, food-grade binders, and combinations thereof.

Claim 6 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix further comprises ingredients selected from the group of digestible starches, resistant starches, other fibre, milled cereals, dried and milled vegetables, cellulose and cellulose derivatives, pet food, maltodextrin, chicory flour, protein isolates, yeast extracts, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 7 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the coating comprises a food-grade moisture barrier.

Claim 8 (original): Pellets within a food product, wherein the pellets are the pellets according to any of claim 1 to 7 and the inner matrix of the pellets comprises at least one component of the food product.

Claim 9 (currently amended): Delivery system of probiotics, which comprises the pellets according to any of claim 1 to [[8]] 7.

Claim 10 (currently amended): Use of the pellets of any of claim 1 to [[8]] 7 as a delivery system for probiotics in a moist, semi-moist, or semi-dry food product.

Claim 11 (original): A process for obtaining a pellets to supplement a food product with viable micro-organisms, which comprises the steps of mixing a preparation of micro-organisms and further components, drying the mixture to an Aw below 0.3, compacting the mixture under pressure to obtain pellets comprising a volume of at least 0.02cm³, and coating the pellets with a moisture barrier.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The process according to claim [[12]] 11, wherein the further components comprise at least part of the ingredients of the food product.

Claim 13 (original): A food product comprising the pellets according to any of claims 1 to 7, wherein the food product and the inner matrix of the pellet share at least one component, ingredient or constituent.

Claim 14 (currently amended): Particulate food, food additive, supplement or pharmaceutical product consisting of a mixture of at least two types of particles, one being the probiotic pellet according to any of claims 1 to [[8]] 7.